

Beginning in the 1960's, Connecticut's Community Colleges have been educating and training Connecticut residents. By providing an inexpensive yet exceptional education, our Community Colleges have prepared thousands of people for careers in every field, and increased the quality of life in Connecticut. On top of being an intern here at the CGA, I am, along with other family members, a student at one of these fine institutions.

My experience at Tunxis Community College has been fantastic. I have encountered engaged students and faculty, a staff which is able and willing to assist its students, and an atmosphere which promotes and fosters success. The opportunities provided for me at Tunxis have changed my life for the better, and after achieving my Associates Degree this Spring I'll be transferring to another college in Connecticut. Tunxis' low tuition costs and stellar support system have provided me the possibility of graduating from a high quality four year college, such as Trinity, Wesleyan, or Uconn, and will have been instrumental in my decision to attend law school upon completion of my Undergraduate Degree.

But I am just one of the thousands of students who attend these schools each semester. Residents of this state continue to enroll in larger quantities every year, and the need for community colleges is undoubtedly growing. If creating and keeping jobs in Connecticut is of import to this committee and this legislature, then I must insist on keeping the current levels of funding for these schools. As state employees, the professors at our community colleges are already reeling from the economic effects of the last few years, and will be further impacted by the Governor's expected budgetary changes.

Coupled with these potential problems, the prospective cuts to Pell Grants issued by the Obama Administration will further the decline of affordable higher education in Connecticut. At a time when our state's economic health is in so precarious a situation, this assembly must understand and embrace the benefits of our community colleges. Passing legislation or approving budgetary adjustments which obstruct access to career-building education will, despite any short term savings, be detrimental to Connecticut's future success. I thank you for your time, and urge you to consider carefully the funding of our foundational schools.

-Darren Bruno